

Marylou Whitney

Why there's still much ado about the Queen of Saratoga

When I think of Marylou Whitney, I think of a gracious hostess with a million dollar smile whose eyes sparkled as we sipped iced tea during a private interview at her magnificent Cady Hill estate early in the New Millennium.

I think of a woman who soon thereafter made my youngest daughter feel like a princess when our paths happened to cross inside of the Saratoga Hospital.

Kiersten, who was curious to see the maternity ward where she was born in August 1993, had been admiring an enormous Easter basket on display in the nearby lobby that looked as if it had been custom designed and decorated by Peter Cottontail himself.

The expression on my child's face must have touched Marylou's heart because before I had an opportunity to purchase a "chance" on the EGGS-traordinary basket, a volunteer insisted Kiersten accept a roll of raffle tickets that exceeded the combined length of both of her arms.

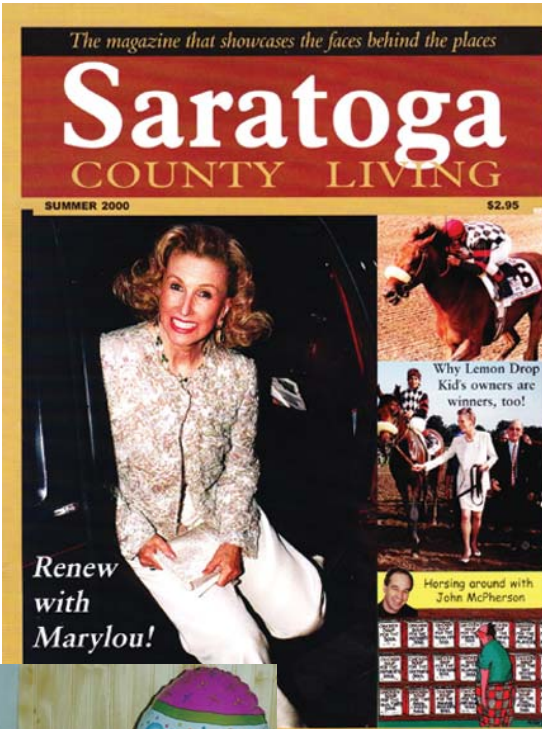
They were, we learned, a gift from Marylou Whitney.

I was at a loss for words to express my gratitude and wished I had a better answer for Kiersten when she later asked me about the identity of "the nice lady" who had showered her with raffle tickets.

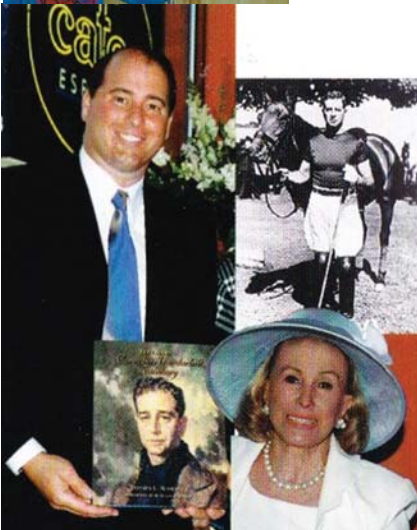
"Her name is Marylou Whitney," I replied. "And I have a feeling that some day you'll be telling your own kids about the day you met her inside of the hospital where you were born."

One of the next times I saw Marylou, who normally favors stylish wide-brimmed hats, she was sporting a construction safety helmet and holding a shovel. Marylou and husband John Hendrickson were helping to unearth a buried treasure containing oversized pink and blue checks – each in the amount of \$250,000. Their combined half a million was to be added to a donation the couple had already made to boost the capital campaign fund for Saratoga's first cardiac catheterization lab.

Two months earlier, they had ceremoniously "unveiled" a magnificent coffee table style hard-covered book honoring Marylou's late husband, C.V. ("Sonny") Whitney. Titled *The Legend of Cornelius Vanderbilt Whitney*, the literary keepsake by Jeffrey L. Rodengen had been commissioned by John as what he called "a long overdue tribute" to Marylou's late husband.



Marylou Whitney graced the cover of the Summer 2000 edition of *Saratoga County Living* (now *Saratoga Living*) magazine. The cover story's opening can be seen below while the above portrait of Marylou and John Hendrickson by Mac Conner was included elsewhere in the issue. It was while Ann Hauprich was preparing the feature around Easter 2000 that six-year-old Kiersten met Marylou in the Saratoga Hospital. Booksigning and hard hat donnings transpired later in 2000.



All proceeds from the sale of the limited edition title were being donated to the new cardiac lab. As of around Labor Day 2000, related donations from Marylou and John had totaled well over \$750,000.

I had been among those present at Border's (then on Broadway in Saratoga Springs) on the summer's day 16 years ago when Marylou, who had written a poignant foreword, arrived for a grand book signing event.

The occasion made an indelible impression for two reasons.

The first was that Marylou and John had arrived in a horse-drawn carriage that drew ooohs and aahs from those standing in line to enter Border's for the book signing. The second was that Marylou happily posed for a picture with one of her greatest longtime admirers: my then 75-year-old mother, Audrey Bopp Hauprich. When my Mom celebrated her 90th birthday in August 2015, she was quick to remind me that Forever Young Marylou would also soon be celebrating HER 90th birthday as both had been born in 1925.

By the time 2001 rolled around, I felt comfortable enough to contact Marylou for assistance with some features I was researching for a forthcoming edition of *Saratoga Living* magazine. One was titled "Jeannette Jordan: On the inside track with Saratoga's rich & famous."

The other was about the Double "H" Hole in the Woods Ranch that had been co-founded by actor Paul Newman and Marylou's good friend Charles Wood, best known as founder of Storytown and The Great Escape. The resulting Summer 2001 edition also included a lovely photo of Marylou with QUAD/GRAPHICS founder Harry Quadracci in connection with a charity near and dear to both of their hearts.

In the midst of all of this, an envelope containing an invitation to the 2001 Whitney Gala was slipped into my home-office mailbox. Only a Fairy Godmother was missing as I subsequently prepared to depart for what was then THE social event of the Saratoga summer season. It was a good thing I tucked a pad and pen into my glitzy purse because before long, I found myself scribbling notes as I chatted with "I Dream of Jeannie" star Barbara Eden and "Dream Come True Comedy Queen" Joan Rivers.

As gracious as she was dazzling, Barbara said it warmed her heart that a new generation had discovered Jeannie through the magic of re-runs. When I found myself standing in a dessert line next to Joan, she was quick to heap compliments on the caterers and decorators as well as on a local hairstylist who had fussed with her tresses.

By now it had become clear to me why there was so much ado about Marylou. But it was what she did in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on our nation on September 11, 2001 that caused me to have an entirely new respect for her.

Following our first interview in the spring of 2000, I'd penned a passage in which I'd described how there were many splendidly decorated rooms within Marylou's Cady Hill mansion in which she could seek seclusion. Yet when seeking genuine serenity, the jet-setting socialite and philanthropist said she preferred to take a short stroll to a simple white building on the pristine grounds that were once the site of a bustling stagecoach stop.



Marylou Whitney and Audrey Bopp Hauprich as photographed by Ann Hauprich at Border's in 2000. The following year, the author's camera captured the joyful expressions of comedy queen Joan Rivers and actress Barbara Eden at the 2001 Whitney Gala. The pair of photo essays below were published in 2002 along with a picture of Ann and gallant escort D. Keith Sherwood.

Snapshots
from the
summers
of 2000
& 2001

"Can we talk?"
JOAN RIVERS

Joan Rivers skipped the parade in the downpour, arriving at the gala looking ravishing in red. A stylist from A Mirror Image Hair Salon had just fussed with Joan's tresses and guests were impressed not only with the celebrated comedian's vibrant looks, but also her refreshingly down-to-earth personality. No wonder Joan's a regular on the Whitney guest list!



Wish Upon A Star!
BARBARA EDEN

The actress best known for her starring role in the "I Dream of Jeannie" TV series made the wishes of many fans come true when she mingled with guests at last summer's Whitney. As gracious as she was dazzling, Barbara said it warms her heart that a whole new generation has discovered "Jeannie" through the magic of reruns. Let's hope this lady, who is a class act in every sense of the word, agrees to an encore visit to The Spa City soon!



“This is the place I come for reflection and renewal – and to give thanks for my blessings,” Marylou had explained as she opened the doors to reveal a tiny chapel with an interior so stark and humble, yet at the same time so peaceful and inviting, that one momentarily could forget about the world outside.

Those paragraphs had been published near the story’s opening while I’m now ashamed to admit readers had to turn a few pages to find her poignant response to another important question: What matters most in life to Marylou Whitney?

Published on Page 24 of the Summer 2000 edition of *Saratoga Living* magazine is the following passage: Among the first topics the woman who has visited all seven continents addressed with earnestness was her concern for the level of patriotism in our nation. “I love this country so much and am proud to be an American. I have great respect for those in our military and can’t bear to hear anyone say anything against America. Do young people today realize how very fortunate they are to live in this great land of ours – to enjoy the freedoms we have?” Marylou had wondered aloud.

And so I was not surprised to receive news in the autumn of 2001 as I was preparing to publish a special “Salute to Patriotism” edition of *Saratoga Living* magazine, that two Statues of Liberty could be seen prominently displayed on either side of an American flag waving in the breeze on the grounds of Cady Hill.

Learning of plans for the issue that documented life in Saratoga County as it unfolded in the days following 9/11, Marylou and John offered sponsorship assistance. Their generous patronage helped make it possible for complimentary copies of the literary “Salute to Patriotism” to be given to members of the US Navy and their families as well as other military personnel who were then stationed in this area.

Photographer Antonio Bucca took the glorious picture of the twin Statues of Liberty that ultimately graced the inside back cover of the Winter 2001-2002 edition. The patriotic image (which appeared opposite an Afterword containing my 9/11 reflections) showcased the three words Marylou Whitney and John Hendrickson had chosen to accompany the image: GOD BLESS AMERICA. Other patriotic images inside that special edition included the collage on the facing page, courtesy of QUAD/GRAPHICS, located in close proximity to Cady Hill in Saratoga Springs.

But the story doesn’t end there. When Kathleen Coleman, Exhibit Curator at Brookside Museum in Ballston Spa (home of the Saratoga County Historical Society), announced plans for a Tenth Anniversary of 9/11 exhibit in 2011, I let Marylou and John know that Tony’s picture of their Statues of Liberty would be among those on display.

The response was not only prompt but went above and beyond the call of duty. A letter arrived in my mailbox from Marylou offering to have the towering pair of statues delivered to the history museum so visitors of all ages could view them as they reflected on the importance of remembering 9/11.

And so, as was later documented in a short piece that was published in the Winter 2011-2012 edition of *Saratoga Living* with a reprint of Tony’s 2001 photo, visitors could experience the ladies of liberty standing guard just inside of the museum’s entrance.

Afterword

Burning the midnight oil to prepare our Once-In-A-Millennium edition two winters ago, I comforted myself with the belief that uncertain times would surely be behind us as long as the power and lights still worked on January 1, 2000.

All was otherwise going relatively well on American soil and it is with some degree of shame that I admit I did not own a flag and rarely took time to ponder anything deeper than picnic plans on the Fourth of July. I had grown equally complacent about our national anthem -- a beautiful song, but not one that brought tears to my eyes. Until September 11, 2001.

As a TV camera slowly panned the scene of the devastation from an angle that included the Statue of Liberty, my eyes began to water. Then the dam broke. I wept as never before for the country I loved, but had taken for granted.

Within hours, I made my way to a nearby florist and requested a simple arrangement of three flowers -- one red, one white, one blue -- tied with ribbons of those same colors. The blossoms symbolized my three daughters, Tara, Marietje and Kiersten . . . each with such a promising future.

Attaching a card that read: *Grandchildren are God's way of saying the world should go on*, I delivered the bouquet to the home of my parents where a flag was already flying outside.

The next day, I ventured inside an American Legion searching for a patriotic banner of my own and have proudly displayed it outside of my residence ever since.

I'm not sure when -- or if -- I will ever take it down.

I do know I will be forever grateful to those businesses and private citizens who helped to make this "Salute to Patriotism" edition possible. A special word of appreciation goes to Marylou Whitney and John Hendrickson for their generous patronage and for inviting Antonio Bucca inside the gates of Cady Hill so that he might capture the enduring image of Old Glory flying between their Statues of Liberty for posterity.

Let us never forget how blessed we are to be able to freely express the love and pride we feel for our country. God Bless America!

*Ann Hauprich
Editor & Publisher*

God Bless
America!



"I love this country so much and am proud to be an American. I have great respect for those in our military and can't bear to hear anyone say anything against America. Do young people today realize how very fortunate they are to live in this great land of ours -- to enjoy the freedoms we have?"
Marylou Whitney had wondered aloud during an interview with author Ann Hauprich a year before the terrorist attacks of 9/11.



In between 2001 and 2011, Marylou also moved mountains of sorts during a health crisis involving my eldest daughter – whose nickname is T-Bird.

That my firstborn's nickname includes the word "bird" will, of course, hold meaning for those who are familiar with some of Marylou's champion thoroughbreds, including Bird Stone, Bird Town and Dear Birdie.

In nearing this tribute's Finish Line, I'm elated to share something that transpired at the Saratoga Race Course on Sunday, July 24, 2016.

What happened brings us full circle to the day 16 years earlier when Marylou had gifted my then six-year-old youngest daughter with an abundance of "chances" on a gigantic Easter basket inside the Saratoga Hospital.

By now 22 and a full-time music teacher, a beaming Kiersten told me upon returning home from the races that she'd decided to bet on a horse named BIRD SONG. The decision, she said, was made after learning the thoroughbred belonged to "the nice lady" who had showered her with raffle tickets to increase her odds of winning the Easter basket when she was a little girl.

Although Kiersten had NOT hit the chocolate bunny jackpot in 2000, she felt she'd won an even greater prize on July 24, 2016 when she not only got a nice return on her \$2 bet, but also got to see Marylou's smiling face on a grandstand monitor. *Well, Hello, Marylou!* There's good reason why there will be much ado about you for generations to come!

From 90210 to 12020 with love

As touched as I was by the spontaneous act of kindness I witnessed between Marylou Whitney and my youngest daughter around Easter 2000, I was moved to tears of joy upon receipt of a hand-written letter from her two years later.

The correspondence arrived after Marylou learned that my first-born had been hospitalized due to life-threatening complications from a disease about which our family then knew nothing. Marylou, on the other hand, was a close friend of a celebrity spokesperson for the National Crohn's & Colitis Foundation: Mary Ann Mobley.

Not long thereafter, an endearing voice with a hint of a southern accent came through on the phone lines linking the west and east coasts. Communications between the glamorous movie star's residence in the 90210 zip code area and our 12020 address soon became routine as the former Miss America and Elvis co-star did everything in her power to empower my daughter to turn this negative into a positive.

Insisting that she be called not once or twice, but about a dozen times over a period of months, Mary Ann gave a complete stranger's child reason to hope that she might lead a full productive life in the future. Always patient, kind and in good humor, Mary Ann listened so intently that my then 20-year-old wrote: "I sensed she genuinely understood – and felt – my pain."

There is no doubt that the now late actress ultimately played a leading role in T-Bird's determination to overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles and to follow her dreams. More than once, Mary Ann's husband (the now late actor Gary Collins) also took time to offer an encouraging word.

When T-Bird and I finally embraced this stellar pair in person at the 2003 Whitney Gala, we rejoiced in the knowledge that while east is east and west is west, the twain can – and do – meet. Sometimes it's under the most extraordinary circumstances ... as when Marylou Whitney bridged the gap between 90210 and 12020.

Pages from the Past



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The first 11
editions of
magazine
founded by
Ann Hauprich.

To view additional features about Marylou, Mary Ann and other souls that were written by Ann Hauprich between 1998 - 2004, please visit:
http://www.legaciesunlimited.com/PDFgallery_Magazine-Memories.htm